

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
EB-08 TRSE-00 /074 W
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R 291708Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4055
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
USMISSION USNATO
USMISSION USBERLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 20723

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: FR, XH
SUBJECT: FRENCH CONTINUE TO IMPROVE THEIR RELATIONS
WITH EASTERN EUROPE

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REF: PARIS 17181

1. SUMMARY: FOLLOWING A PERIOD OF INACTIVITY DURING
THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN, THE FRENCH HAVE RE-LAUNCHED
THEIR EAST EUROPEAN POLICY WITH A SERIES OF HIGH LEVEL
VISITS INVOLVING ALL THE EAST EUROPEAN STATES. THE
FRENCH SEE NO CONFLICT BETWEEN THIS EFFORT AND THE

COOLING OF THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE USSR; IN FACT, THEY BELIEVE IT SHOWS FRENCH-SOVIET TIES ARE BETTER THAN THEY LOOK. THE BROAD EFFORT TO IMPROVE BILATERAL TIES WITH EAST EUROPEAN STATES CARRIES FORWARD A LONG-STANDING FRENCH POLICY. END SUMMARY.

2. IN RECENT WEEKS THE NUMBER OF VISITS BETWEEN FRANCE AND EASTERN EUROPE HAS BEEN IMPRESSIVE, ESPECIALLY FOLLOWING THE 4-5 MONTH LULL DURING THE FRENCH ELECTION CAMPAIGN:

-- GDR POLITBURO MEMBER MITTAG VISITED PARIS JUNE 5-8.

-- STATE SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OLIVIER STIRN VISITED PRAGUE AND BELGRADE JUNE 9-13.

-- ROMANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER ANDREI VISITED PARIS JUNE 18-22.

-- QUAI DIRECTOR OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS ANDREANI VISITED SOFIA JUNE 26-27.

-- POLISH FOREIGN MINISTER WOJTASZEK WILL VISIT PARIS JULY 3-4.

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-- STATE SECRETARY STIRN WILL VISIT THE GDR IN JULY.

OTHER VISITS ARE IN THE WORKS; GISCARD TO ROMANIA EARLY IN 1979, PRIME MINISTER BARRE TO POLAND IN OCTOBER, AND A RANGE OF OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS WILL BE TRAVELLING IN BOTH DIRECTIONS.

3. THE PRACTICAL RESULTS OF THESE VISITS HAVE THUS FAR BEEN RATHER SLIM. A NUMBER OF TRADE DEALS HAVE BEEN CONCLUDED (E.G. A BILLION DOLLAR AGREEMENT TO DOUBLE PRODUCTION OF RENAULT AUTOMOBILES IN ROMANIA). BUT MAJOR SALES HAVE BEEN AN EXCEPTION, AND THE REAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS ARRAY OF VISITS IS POLITICAL. IT IS BOTH THE CONTINUATION OF THE LONG-STANDING FRENCH EAST EUROPEAN POLICY AND A MEASURED EXPERIMENT IN MAINTAINING FRIENDLY TIES WITH THE EAST EUROPEANS DURING A PERIOD OF DISTINCTLY COOL RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW.

4. THE FRENCH HAVE LONG MAINTAINED THAT IT WAS BOTH DESIRABLE AND POSSIBLE TO DEVELOP GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH INDIVIDUAL EAST EUROPEAN STATES, PROVIDED

CERTAIN LIMITATIONS ON THE RELATIONSHIP WERE RESPECTED.
THEY BELIEVE THEY HAVE HAD A CERTAIN SUCCESS OVER THE
YEARS, AND CITE THEIR RELATIONS WITH POLAND AS AN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 20723

EXAMPLE OF EXCELLENT, EVEN PRIVILEGED, TIES BETWEEN A
WESTERN AND A COMMUNIST STATE. THEY ARE CURRENTLY
SEEKING A SIMILAR LEVEL OF RELATIONS WITH ROMANIA; A

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GISCARD VISIT WILL SIGNIFY THAT A NEW POLITICAL PLANE HAS BEEN REACHED. THE FRENCH OF COURSE RECOGNIZE THE LIMITATIONS ON SUCH BRIDGE-BUILDING. IN THE CASE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, FOR EXAMPLE, POLITICAL RELATIONS CANNOT BE RAISED TO THE HIGHEST LEVEL BECAUSE OF PUBLIC DISTASTE FOR THE HUSAK REGIME IN FRANCE. BUT EVEN IN THIS CASE THE FRENCH BELIEVE IT IS BETTER TO MAINTAIN A POLITICAL DIALOGUE THAN TO LEAVE THE CZECHS IN A GHETTO.

5. THE MOST INTERESTING ASPECT OF THE PRESENT PHASE OF FRENCH RELATIONS WITH EASTERN EUROPE IS THAT IT IS SET AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF DETERIORATED FRANCO-SOVIET TIES (SEE REFTTEL). ONE OF THE ASSUMPTIONS OF FRENCH EASTERN POLICY HAS BEEN THAT IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO GO VERY FAR WITH THE EAST EUROPEAN REGIMES UNLESS GOOD RELATIONS WERE MAINTAINED WITH MOSCOW. ON THE SURFACE, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THIS RULE HAS BEEN BROKEN IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT THE QUAI DOESN'T SEE IT THAT WAY. THEY BELIEVE FRENCH RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW ARE BETTER THAN THEY APPEAR. THEY NOTE THAT THE ESSENTIAL MESSAGE WHICH GISCARD CONVEYED TO BREZHNEV IN HIS LATEST LETTER WAS THAT DISAGREEMENT OVER AFRICA SHOULD NOT SPOIL FRANCO-SOVIET BILATERAL RELATIONS, A CONCEPT WITH WHICH BREZHNEV, IN HIS REPLY, AGREED.

6. IN FACT, QUAI OFFICIALS THINK THAT FRENCH ABILITY TO CONTINUE DEVELOPING THEIR RELATIONS WITH EASTERN EUROPE IS A MEASURE OF THE FACT THAT MOSCOW STILL SEES FRANCE AS A POSITIVE FACTOR IN THE WEST, WITH A SPECIAL ROLE IN EAST-WEST RELATIONS. THESE OFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT THE WARMTH AND FRANKNESS WHICH CHARACTERIZED ANDREANI'S UNPUBLICIZED CONSULTATIONS IN SOFIA ARE A MEASURE OF MOSCOW'S WILLINGNESS TO PERMIT FRENCH RELATIONS WITH EASTERN EUROPE TO CONTINUE DESPITE THE OBJECTIONS THE KREMLIN CURRENTLY HAS TO A NUMBER OF FRENCH POLICIES. (THE BULGARIANS MADE IT CLEAR TO THE FRENCH THAT THE US WAS THE PRINCIPAL WESTERN VILLAIN, EVEN ACCUSING THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION OF SEEKING THE REVERSAL OF THE COMMUNIST REVOLUTION IN THE USSR.)

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7. JUST HOW FAR THE FRENCH WILL BE ABLE TO TAKE THEIR RELATIONS WITH EASTERN EUROPE, AND THE VALUE OF THE

RELATIONSHIP, REMAINS DOUBTFUL. THE FRENCH BELIEVE THAT THE STRUCTURE OF THEIR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS, ESPECIALLY THE MIXED COMMISSIONS, PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH IT IS POSSIBLE TO ENGAGE THE COMMUNIST REGIMES AND TO EXACT COMMERCIAL CONCESSIONS. THE EAST EUROPEANS ARE PREPARED TO PAY A PRICE FOR POLITICAL ACCEPTANCE, AND THROUGH CAREFUL CONTROL OF POLITICAL FAVORS A CERTAIN TRADE-OFF CAN BE ACHIEVED. THE FRENCH ALSO THINK THE HELSINKI ACCORD MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR THE EAST EUROPEANS TO EXPAND THEIR TIES WITH THE WEST -- AND THIS WAS A PRINCIPAL FRENCH OBJECTIVE IN THE CSCE -- PROVIDED THE TACIT RULES OF DISCRETION AND RESPECT FOR THE FULL SOVEREIGNTY OF THE EASTERN REGIMES ARE RESPECTED. THE FRENCH KNOW THAT THE SOVIETS WILL NOT PERMIT A DRAMATIC SHIFT IN EAST EUROPEAN ALLEGIANCES, EITHER POLITICALLY OR ECONOMICALLY, BUT WITHIN THE NARROW MARGIN OF MANEUVER WHICH IS AVAILABLE, THEY ARE DETERMINED TO ADVANCE AS FAR AS POSSIBLE.

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